

Dear Environment Committee members,

As a resident of Rowayton, Connecticut, I support a complete ban on the hand-harvesting of horseshoe crabs, especially for the bait fishery in Connecticut.

I live along the shoreline, and begin to watch and count the numbers of male horseshoe crabs who arrive each May. In early June during the high tides, three days before and after a new and full moon, female horseshoe crabs also descend on our shoreline, coming ashore or staying in very shallow water to lay their blue-green eggs. They dig holes and deposit their eggs, and male crabs, positioned along the water's edge as females arrive, hang on to the female's shell and fertilize eggs as they're dragged over the nest. The eggs that last beyond meals for migratory shorebirds like red knots take about two weeks to hatch. And it's important to note that red knots are at risk of extinction because anglers catch horseshoe crabs for bait.

Horseshoe crab eggs are important food for migratory birds. The fates of shorebirds are tied to the abundance of horseshoe crabs, and these ancient mariner's fates are tied to your decision about whether you'll support a ban on catching them for bait in Connecticut.

It's clear to any Connecticut resident walking the beach that horseshoe crabs, once plentiful, are now depleted. They're in crisis, which is why it's essential to halt the frivolous seasonal slaughter of them by approximately 15 commercial anglers DEEP has licensed who kill them for the bait fishery in Connecticut. It makes no sense to issue quotas of hand harvesting up to 500 horseshoe crabs per day from late May through July 7th – a staggering, permitted annual catch of 48,689 horseshoe crabs -- for an imperiled species that's headed toward extinction. Please call the whole thing off and save the Atlantic horseshoe crabs in Connecticut with your most important vote in support of HB 5140.

Thank you,

Priscilla Feral
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